

2: Damm et al. --190 [6]

(1909) 1938

Woleaians
Faraulep

116, 765

After four to five weeks, [KS: after burial] there is a big funeral feast (eāxi giri mēxa), and this is also a means of repaying the friends and relatives for their mats. For three months the widow and widower (nipith) are not allowed to cut their hair.

bailigógo*bailikelik**bailigóifarbai li rórobai li djupkábong

fixing up the dead

to take the dead out to the sea

carrying of the dead (áfar, shoulder)

lifting of the dead to the shoulder

holding of a dead child in the arms

the farewell, goodbye to the dead.

The first death of a new moon is mourned by a work taboo of four days.

Some families, who were close to the dead, gather many thousands (20-30,000) coconuts; this may take many months or even as long as an entire year. All the coconuts are piled up in front of the canoe-house and as soon as possible are distributed among all the islanders, including the children, in honor of the dead.

The same procedure is followed with taro; 200-1000 taro are collected in one spot and then are distributed. When the bai taboos are over, all the natives who have brought mats receive coconuts and the same is true of the women who cover (angefüllt=stuffed?) the dead with reng, yellow turmeric powder. Some of the persons, who have given

*pai legogo, payment, pai, for the fastening, gogo: first banquet for the assistants in the preparation of the body, held as soon as possible.

**likelik, leaving, throwing away of the body, pai, payment-food, often together with the pai legogo.

special attention to the dead are awarded for their efforts by food payments.

Beloved relatives are washed with the water of young coconuts and then the water is drunk. Mummification was practiced in the past; frequently mummies were hung up on the ridge-piece of the canoe-house and were buried after they had been there for some time. High ranking chiefs were laid out on stretchers, and wooden bowls were placed underneath them to catch the water of the body. The terrible smell caused the relatives to stick lavender (uārong) in their noses, which had to be pierced for that purpose. Lewis had seen a dead child laid out in this fashion. We saw the body of a child which was painted yellow and ornamented in an elaborate manner; Figure 65a and b show it [VMM: see source].

4: Krämer--117-120

(1909) 1937

Woleaians

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Elato

[VMM: For death and funeral customs, see 4: Krämer 117-120.]

4: Krämer--121
116, 765

(1909) 1937

Woleaians
Lamotrek

The members of the clan of the dead are subject to taboo for four days, and the closer relatives until the end of the month. Garlands of coconut pinnae are hung up at the house in order to avert the spirits.

28: Spiro--140
116, 765, 152

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians-1-3
Ifalik

"If the person dies in the early part of the day, the mourning is brief, and he is buried the same day. However, should he die in the late afternoon or evening, he is not buried until the next day, in which case the mourning lasts all night.

While the mourning is in process, friends and relatives are busy with the burial preparations. The corpse is painted red, and it is dressed in a new lavalava. The men who have brought rope are engaged in making a long rope-net, in which the body is to be wrapped.

The contrasting behavior of the mourners and of the others is very interesting. The mourners wail throughout this entire proceedings, and often get into a state of complete frenzy. This is particularly true of the person's mothers and spouse. In the case of the man's death, mentioned above, the mother and wife beat their breasts and scratched their faces with such ferocity that they had to be restrained by some of the other women, who forcibly held their arms behind their backs. The others, however, seem little effected by the scene. It is true that the children are not permitted the usual run of the yard, and the young men inhibit their usual horseplay, but the solemnity that marks an American funeral, for example, is completely lacking. The men working on the rope-net seem quite gay, and joke as they work. The young children of the deceased seem unaware of the death of their parent, and continue to play and laugh, though the adults will periodically attempt to restrain any undue boisterousness.

This raises a serious psychological problem. Is the intense mourning of the immediate adult family of the deceased a genuine experience, or is it all 'culturally patterned'? Since I observed only three funerals, and the pattern in all three was the same, I tentatively adopted the hypothesis that both factors entered into the behavior, and my questioning of the people as well as other evidence seemed to indicate that the hypothesis had some degree of validity. My informants stated that all women, for example, express their mourning by tearing at their faces and breasts. Furthermore, if a woman did not do so, she would be criticized by the people as not showing sufficient love for the deceased. This would seem to indicate that the overt behavior itself is learned. But how about the private emotions of the mourners? The feeling, not the behavior, is the variable factor. There is evidence that indicates that the feeling, in some cases at least, is very intense. When Navor, died, her husband could not perform the culturally patterned wailing. He broke down completely and sobbed like a baby. Here we see complete personal disorganization so that the behavior becomes a pure expression of personal feeling, rather than becoming channeled in the cultural mode. In another instance, Arivimae, a young married man in his late twenties, burned the house of his dead mother, the day after her funeral, as an expression of his heated feelings. Unfortunately I did not observe his behavior during the funeral itself. But whether it was then culturally or

28: Spiro--140
116, 765, 152

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Woleaians-3
Ifalik

personally expressive, this extreme display of emotion indicates quite clearly the intensity of his feeling, since the practice of burning the house of the deceased is not practiced in this culture."

28: Spiro--141 [3]
116, 765

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"The immediate family of the deceased does not work for ten days, and for four days it prepares no food, but is brought food by friends and relatives. The males may not climb coconut trees to obtain either coconuts or toddy. After the four day taboo in cooking and tree climbing, the male kin of the deceased bring baskets of coconuts to his household. The immediate family shave their heads, as a sign of mourning, and the mother continues to wail for the deceased every morning and evening for four days. The mourning is completely patterned, taking place in the lagoon, and consisting of the wailing recital of an arueru."

28: Spiro--141 [4]
116, 765, 784, 551

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"A general taboo, which lasts not only for the four days of mourning, is the mentioning of the name of the dead. The immediate family may not ever mention it, nor may a stranger mention it in their presence. I saw a little child receive a beating from its mother for repeatedly using the name of its dead father, after she had warned him not to."

28: Spiro--141 [5]
116, 765, 784

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Finally, I accidentally discovered a taboo which applies to certain specific people, and which lasts during the four day mourning period. Lautrilus, a girl in her early teens, was eating some coconut meat, and I asked her for a piece. She extended her hand, but Tom, who was with us, would not permit her to give it to me. It seems that should any living person have had the same illness from which the deceased dies, he may not share his food, for the four days of mourning, with others."

28: Spiro--141-142
116, 622, 765, 784

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Taboos on working and cooking are much more stringent should the death occur in [142] a chiefly lineage. The immediate family may not work for one month, the clan may not work for ten days, and the entire village must refrain from working for four days. However, the men may fish, which is what they did after the death of Navor, who was a member of a lineage of chiefs. The canoes houses, however, are empty and the women merely sit idly. The men may climb the coconut trees, though they may not climb trees along the beach where they can be seen, but must go into the bush."

28: Spiro--142-143
116, 765, 775, 855

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians-1-^y
Ifalik

"The behavior of the people following the burial is extremely interesting because of a seeming paradox. The paradox was obvious from the first death that I witnessed, and the same pattern was repeated in the other four deaths, and in each case my field notes remark on the phenomenon, though with different possible interpretations. I refer to the great discrepancy between the intense wailing prior to, and immediately following death, and the apparent lack of mourning and seeming forgetting of the person after death. The same person who indulges in the intense wailing, scratching of face and chest, and indulging in what seems like almost pure hysterical behavior, will, after the burial, revert to his normal personality, smiling, laughing and joking with no signs of bereavement. One would superficially say that this shows that the people do not really love their kin, and the wailing at the funeral is entirely formal and stylized. But this answer would be far from the truth. Despite the patterned nature of the mourning, the feelings felt are genuine. There is no question about the intense feelings of Arivimae, who burned his mother's house, or of Navor's husband. Yet, despite their acute suffering, they too showed no evidence of mourning or acute suffering even a couple of days after the burial. After the four day mourning period, they were in the canoe houses, laughing and joking, interested in the daily events, and eating heartily. The men had returned from fishing, and Navor's husband was intensely interested in the fish he was about to eat, displaying

28: Spiro--142-143
116, 765, 775, 855

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Woleaians-2
Ifalik

a remarkable appetite for a man in sorrow.

But the problem goes even deeper. The people are vitally concerned about the recovery of an ill person. They will, and do, sacrifice energy, time, wealth, to ensure his recovery. Maroligar, and Wetriliar, for example, the maternal uncle and brother-in-law, respectively, of Navor, did everything in their powers to save her when she was ill. They conducted rituals, they made medicine, they literally devoted their entire day for a period of at least a month, when she was critically ill, to her service. When they saw that she could not be helped and that she was going to die, they were deeply crushed. Their mental suffering was obvious to anyone. But immediately after the burial, the very same day, they were laughing and smiling, giving no evidence of any mourning. It is as if the deceased is completely forgotten, as if he never existed, and life goes on. In fact during the official mourning period, Maroligar spent his days playing cards with the young men.

Now to us this may seem callous. This is another indication, some might say, of the primitive' lack of sensibility. But, such an interpretation would be false and merely display a narrow ethnocentrism. That the people love each other deeply is shown throughout this entire monograph. It is true, of course, that the love applies only to the living not to the dead. And in a small society, such as Ifaluk, reality dictates the necessity of such behavior. Since all the people interact with great intimacy, and the relationship

28: Spiro--142-143
116, 765, 775, 855

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Woleaians-3
Ifalik

between them is very close, the culture would collapse if mourning were long and protracted, and the people let themselves be overwhelmed by death. Intense suffering would incapacitate them, they could not do their work, and the results would be disastrous. Instead, the mourning is brief, but intensely acute, a real catharsis is experienced, and then life continues.

But the reality situation alone cannot explain this phenomenon. People do not or cannot always adjust to the demands of reality. Furthermore, what must be explained here is not the overt behavior but the psychological experience. The people could conceivably return to their normal living, but still suffer. What accounts for the seeming abrupt end of the psychological mourning? As far as I can see, there [143] are only two conceivable reasons. First, there is the belief in the continued existence of the soul. The person is not extinguished, his existence continues, but in another form, and there is some communication with him. This answer, however, is not adequate since the same belief obtains in other societies, and the reaction to death is not the same. Another answer suggests itself, which we shall point to only briefly here, and examine its implications and ramifications in the section on personality. The growing child, it will be remembered, forms no exclusive emotional attachments. He is surrounded by many adults, many of whom play as important roles in his life as his own parents. This means that the emotional cathexis of the individual are not intense, but are distributed over a number of

28: Spiro--142-143

116, 765, 775, 855

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians-4

Ifalik

people. This means that though the individual feels a loss at the death of a loved one, this loss is not as a severe drainage of one's own ego since there are numerous other individuals for whom the individual feels similar attachments. In a society in which individuals form exclusive emotional cathesis, death means a serious drainage of one's own narcissistic supplies, since the identification has been intense, and the other's extinction is felt as one's own. But there the cathexis are diffuse, the loss of one is not severe, since the person has established many other identifications and they continue after the death of any one. This means, to employ a figure that though one psychological tentacle has lost its object, the others still cling to theirs."